

Letters to the Editor

The Dresden Pictures

SIR,—I was in East Berlin last week studying the Dresden pictures in the company of Dr. Otto Kurz of the Warburg Institute, and can confirm Atticus's report that their condition is in general satisfactory.

Owing to insufficient space being available in the Nationalgalerie, by no means all the pictures which have been sent back from Russia are exhibited (and, consequently, catalogued). Thanks to the courtesy of the gallery authorities, who gave us every facility, we were able to inspect a considerable number of pictures in store, some still bearing their Russian labels. A few were not yet unpacked, and there appeared to us to be no reason to doubt that the packing had been carried out with every care.

We were also informed that a large number of Dresden pictures of the second rank are now assembled at Schloss Pillnitz. The task of checking the whereabouts of all the pictures and verifying the war losses (which in the case of the old masters are said to be few in number) is now in progress, and it is hoped that complete lists will be made available in due course.

Atticus is wide of the mark in suggesting that the official guide-lecturers claim that the Dresden pictures are "now for the first time the property of the German people." His informant may have overheard such a pronouncement made in the exhibition by someone unaware of the well-known fact that the gallery has been State property for very many years; what we happened to hear of the remarks of the many official guide-lecturers (who are mostly young university students of art-history) struck us as notably objective.

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[Atticus writes: So far from being "wide of the mark," I was actually quoting from a pamphlet issued by the East German Ministry of Culture for the guidance of those who take parties of young people round the exhibition. It says in its foreword that "only now do the pictures really belong to the German people," and goes on to say that even when they had been on view in the Dresden Gallery the ruling "capitalists and Junkers" had not been interested to make the workers familiar with them.

Other readers have asked what is known of the whereabouts of the pictures during the last eleven years. The great majority were cared for in Russia, pending the reconstruction of the Dresden Gallery; they were first seen last year at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow.]